

GUIDE

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MY EXPERIENCE WITH CONVERTS

Rev. John T. Byrne

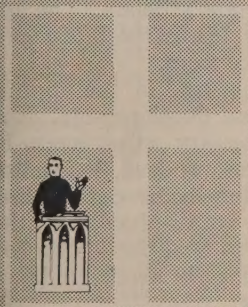
HOW BEST "IMPLANT" MORALITY

Rev. Vincent M. Novak, S.J.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN CATHOLIC CLERGY AND LAITY

Joseph Lawrence

DECEMBER 1962, No. 173



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IT SEEMS TO ME

Ecumenism and Conversion

A topic on which we may expect clarification from the Council is the relation between work for reunion and convert work. Better understanding of the aims and methods proper to each and the consequences of all this in the pastoral ministry are of the utmost importance.

It is clear that both activities are distinct yet they complement each other. "The work of Christian Unity," said Archbishop Heenan of Liverpool recently, "should go hand in hand with the work of conversion." The one is direct, immediate and personal and is determined by the degree of preparation we find in an individual for a charitable presentation of the truth. The other is long range, indirect and is concerned with organized bodies of non-Catholic Christians.

Pope John has made unmistakably clear his profound interest in the work of reunion. And we may confidently expect that Cardinal Bea, head of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, will present a balanced statement of ecumenical aims and the procedures Catholics should adopt to further them.

After a slow start, American Catholics have become increasingly aware of ecumenism. The Catholic press has been generous in the space it has devoted to this subject and has carried articles by authorities in the field. Many bishops have given approval to Catholic groups who have organized dialogues between Catholic and Protestant scholars. The appearance of *The Ecumenist* (see page 16) is the latest evidence of this awakened interest and concern.

Priests who have exercised laudable zeal in the apostolate for conversions must welcome these developments. Nor should they be slow to make the necessary adjustments in their thinking and apostolic procedures. Indeed, it is altogether likely that many of them will become outstanding ecumenists. Perhaps no one realizes better than they the relative failure of direct convert work to heal the ills caused by religious division. And they will eagerly await guidance from their bishops on this vital matter.

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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My Experience With Converts

Rev. John T. Byrne

Having been invited to give a few observations on one's own experience before such an august group of authorities as this, makes me feel somewhat akin to Zacheus. He was a small man. I never felt smaller. He climbed a tree—I certainly am up one right now! And the Lord called Zacheus down, which is apt to be my fate for being so presumptuous!

I am stationed at Holy Cross Church on West 42nd Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. Holy Cross is famous for many reasons. One of them is the Perpetual Novena to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. This devotion is now in its 27th year. Years ago at the height of its popularity it was drawing 21,000 people every Monday. While it has declined appreciably since the war years we still hold nine services every Monday. Many non-Catholics attend these services and it was inevitable that a remarkable number of conversions can be counted as a by-product of this devotion. The Novena brought them in—the grace of God did the rest.

Forty-second Street is not the best environment or the most fertile ground for conversions. In a recent issue of the Jesuit National magazine *America*, Forty-second Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues was termed as a "National Disgrace"—yet here is a church bordering on the crossroads of the world where many a non-Catholic has found his introduction to the truth.

No talk on "convert making" ever began without quoting the Divine Mandate "Euntes ergo," "Going therefore, teach ye all Nations!" Probably the most important word is that text in "Euntes"! "Going." This is a "Going" business—but unfortunately some of us never get going—but we get the convert going to the nearest convert center so that we become like a referral

agency! Who wants to start the tedious task of instructing a convert? It's usually after dinner, we're tired after a heavy day, and a heavy meal and it would be so nice just to crawl up to the room and lean back in our Barca-lounger and look at T.V. After all, there are enough young priests who should have enough zeal for this sort of thing—or don't the young priests have any zeal these days?

But then there's that Divine Mandate ringing in our ears! The Apostles weren't too old—they didn't pull rank or seniority on their juniors! They just dug in and got going and sometimes after spending the night in jail as we know from the Acts of the Apostles. So, that word "Euntes" applies specifically to us. We can't teach until we get going in the literal physical sense. Every handout, every mendicant, every crackpot can find his way to the rectory door. We listen to his story and take it apart exposing the flaws—and more often than not there are more holes than in Swiss cheese! But how different it is with the convert to be! Instead of pushing himself on us, he's somewhat timid and hesitant. And those few minutes of that first meeting with us are either going to make him or break him!

And then that word "Euntes" has another implication in it. Very few converts come through the rectory door. We've got to go out and meet them and sell them! As they say on Broadway, we've got to "work out of a hat"! We don't really need an office—Christ didn't use an office—He picked up His converts in such widely disparate

A Luncheon talk delivered at *The Third National Conference on Convert Work*. St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, N. Y. June, 1961. Sponsored by The Paulist Institute for Religious Research and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine of New York. A condensation.

places as the seashore, the market place, the synagogue and the tax office. He didn't say "If you want to see Me, come around next Tuesday night at seven and be sure to be on time!" No, the convert can't be expected to come to us—we've got to go to him! Fact is: standing on the church steps on 42nd Street we've picked up more converts than sitting in the rectory!

For this reason there may be a lot of wisdom in the suggestion of a certain great Jesuit who advocated that priests should ride trains and ships and buses endlessly! It would provide a great opportunity for meeting people—and meeting them under relaxed circumstances! Then when we've told them about Christ and His Church and when they inquire "Master where dwellest Thou?" we can invite them around to the rectory by saying "Come and See!"

According to no less an authority than Father John O'Brien of Notre Dame "the annual average per priest is 1.5 converts." We have the truth to sell! Can it be that we are such inefficient salesmen?

But convert work is not easy. What are some of the trials and difficulties of the convert makers? Well, the rectory parlor is usually the "locus aptus" for instructions. They take place in this strange setting surrounded by ledgers and baptismal and marriage registers—with a dim light overhead (why is it that the Catholic Church is so economical about voltage for people who are seeking light? I think more priests wear glasses than ministers!) I can readily see why Christ selected the shore of a lake instead of an office in the synagogue. In fact, didn't He get angry with what He saw in the synagogue?

Certainly He would have found it a little difficult on Forty-second Street. The doorbell would be ringing endlessly. The maid would be trying to expedite the departure of some mendicant who was more thirsty than hungry. The more persistent thirsty mendicant sometimes prevails over the argumentative maid, finds his way into the hallway where he proceeds to scrutinize the group under instruction. Meanwhile, the telephone is ringing and the caller wants a baptismal certificate mailed to him. But the Irish caller on the other end doesn't know exactly when he was born but he knows he is two years senior to his brother Pat if that fact is any help—the only thing is, he doesn't know when Pat was born either!

And he is sure he was baptized in Holy Cross because his mother often mentioned Father Duffy of World War I fame. ("Everyone knew Father Duffy, he reassures the maid" and it's too bad we don't have priests like him today!") They never had trouble getting a certificate when Father Duffy was alive!

Meanwhile there are other extraneous circumstances that make instructions a little difficult. If it's warm weather, the windows are open to let in a little air. Outside there's a diesel truck having some motor trouble. The driver is trying to cure the cough and the sputter by revving the motor endlessly at a higher speed. The class in the parlor is straining with ears cocked, the priest is straining with his voice, straining for words, straining for a thought—everybody is straining in their seats—it looks like a television set with the picture on and the sound off! And the priest finally dismisses the class in defeat and as the last of the neophytes descends the rectory steps, the diesel truck pulls away from the curb—which is par for the course!

Priest's Personality

Winning converts depends to a great degree on the personality of the priest. The old human factor counts so much in salesmanship. The priest has to be kind, tolerant, understanding—but he has to be cheerful and have a sense of humor! That's one of the big assets in this work. The would-be convert approaches the priest with a lot of fear and trepidity and hesitancy. Those feelings can be dispelled by the warmth of the priest's greeting and his effort to try to make him feel at home. And if there's a class, we try to introduce him to the other members of the class. And if while we are discoursing on some abstruse subject, he asks some question that has nothing to do with the price of tea in China, we have to exercise patience and forbearance. To promote enthusiasm we invite their questions but we can reasonably expect that they will not always be ad rem. After discoursing on the Trinity you may be amazed to hear someone say he understands it clearly "it's like three persons living in the one house!"

God help you if you ever get someone in the class who proves a troublemaker. There is a certain type (and they are rare and their dispositions are easily recognizable)

who sometimes try to embarrass the priest by asking a real knotty question that is aimed at getting you on the horns of a dilemma. Well, like the Divine Master, we have to reckon with the modern Scribes and Pharisees who would try to ensnare us in our speech.

And when we take the convert on the "guided tour" of the church and show him the altar and explain its significance, and we bring him to the confessional and describe the grate to someone who may visualize it as a relic of the Inquisition or a modern torture chamber—you will sometimes hear them make the prophecy that before they emerge from that first experience the walls of the church will fall in! Sometimes the "light touch" can dispel misgivings and prepare people for the solemn things we have to say on a difficult subject. A few years ago the *New York Times* published a story about the rudely instructed Catholic who told the priest in the box that he had two sins to confess. The priest asked what they were. The penitent replied "one is mortal and one is venial." "Which is the venial sin?" asked the priest. "I shot my wife," said the penitent. "That's the venial?" asked the priest? "And what was the mortal?" "I missed my mother-in-law!"

I sometimes wonder if we are diligent in advertising the convert instruction from the pulpits. In how many churches is an announcement to this effect ever made? Consider the amount of time we spend boosting the collection? A little boy being brought to Mass for the first time on Sunday was asked by his father what he thought about it, to which he responded "Oh the music was wonderful but the commercials were too long!"

The number of converts to the Catholic faith from the ranks of the military during the war years was overwhelming and astounding. For obvious discreet reasons these figures have never been published. If war is evil we may allow ourselves the paradox that some good comes out of evil! There is probably no more fertile field for a zealous priest, for the harvest is certainly white and waiting for laborers. Some priest-chaplains on active duty have made great names for themselves in this apostolate. And while we are talking about the spiritual work in the Armed Forces and the conversions per month and per year let us not

overlook another important fact—the number of vocations that have come out of the Armed Forces. According to the Military Ordinate they send out 500 testimonials per year!

Going back to my own days in the service (and I don't mean the Civil War!) we chaplains had some very interesting and fruitful experiences. Army regulations forbade the issuance of any literature that was aimed at disparaging another religion. Nevertheless and notwithstanding my opposite in the Protestant ranks proceeded to hand out to his congregation one Sunday a pamphlet entitled "Twelve Reasons Why I Am Not a Catholic!" The strange result of his imprudence was two converts to Catholicism. The pamphlet had had the opposite effect to the one intended by the author. One of the new converts was the son of a Protestant minister.

Chaplain's Example

No ex-chaplain wants to plague his audience with war stories or regale his listeners with tales of heroism. The famous Father Duffy of World War I fame set a great pattern in this regard. During that war, the sale of War Bonds had fallen off so considerably that the government resorted to every psychological means to arouse the enthusiasm and support of the home front. To promote the sale of War Bonds and to appeal in particular to the Irish and the Catholic element there appeared the headlines on the newspapers one day "Father Duffy Shot!" When Duffy learned this in the trenches he cabled back "the story is only half true!" As a group, the Catholic Chaplains were amongst the most highly and most often decorated soldiers.

But while they were serving their country they were really and principally acting as officers in the Army of Christ! Long before the present Peace Corps they were representatives of democracy, of the democracy of Christ and His Church. Not only to the military personnel but to the inhabitants and natives of foreign lands. Aided and abetted by the generosity of the American soldier, they were able to show forth the charity of Christ to the peoples of war stricken countries. From bishops of dioceses all over the world have come glowing reports of the splendid works of the Catholic Chaplains.

But their crowning glory was not so much their valor, their heroism—their greatest accomplishment was as a missionary and a convert maker. Their deeds in this regard will never be publicized but they are written in the annals of heaven. Military restrictions may not allow the publication of the number of converts or the num-

ber of vocations from the military, but some day, please God, St. Peter may give them a personal report.

Of course, the life of a priest isn't very easy—he has innumerable things to do. But above all he must harken to the words of the High Priest: "Euntes ergo et docete."

■ ■ ■

How Best "Implant" Morality (2)

Rev. Vincent M. Novak, S.J.

In last month's number of this periodical, the question was raised, "Is morality a part of the Gospel 'good news' which we are trying to bring to our high school students, or is it rather the onerous 'price to be paid' for salvation?" An attempt was made to provide an answer in the light of more recent thinking on the part of both moral theologians and religious educators. The first article can serve as a necessary theoretic background for the following practical suggestions which, it is hoped, will stimulate further reflection and discussion among the teachers in our high schools engaged in the moral formation of youth.

It was thought best to offer six suggestions, each numbered in the order judged most effective for the theological and psychological aspects of moral education.

Morality in Salvation-History

1. Morality should be taught within the framework of Salvation-History. The student in this setting will with a sense of vivid reality see with the eyes of history how God out of love again and again took the initiative in His dealings with men despite their repeated disloyalties. The student will meet in biblical history many fascinating human personalities in whose lives he will vicariously live both the grateful acceptance of God's initiatives and also their shameful rejection through sin. As examples of this approach, where better to

discuss temptation and sin than in Eden; or how could youths be better educated in the privileges and responsibilities of parenthood than through the infancy Gospel from the Annunciation into the hidden life of Nazareth?

Christocentric Focus

2. Since by God's design the present economy of salvation is, furthermore, Christocentric, morality as part of that design must also be centered in Christ. This is no pedagogical method or motivational gimmick, but the very essence of God's plan for men. Although teachers welcome the unifying and motivational value of a Christocentric synthesis, they at times miss bringing out the fuller meaning and impact which it commands. Maturing students should be taught to realize that this Christ-focus means more than modeling their actions upon what they have learned of Christ in the Gospels. By careful teaching they can with increasing light come to value as exceedingly precious the configuration to and union with the Mystical Christ we discussed in the first part of this article. "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." The paramount role of liturgy here should be evident from the earlier installment. Granted that this appreciation takes

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spiritual perception of a high order, but who will say with positiveness that such perception with God's grace is beyond the capacities of our young people? We as teachers can adopt the more realistic attitude of St. Paul: "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God has given the growth. . . . For we are God's helpers, you are God's tillage, God's building."

Personal Commitment

3. If Christocentric, then morality should become increasingly personalist, especially with adolescents who at this age of fresh emotional experience are opening their inner selves to the communion of friendship. Christ should become their friend par excellence. If properly disposed by a Christocentric orientation in the classroom, it can be hoped that they will experience the inspiration to join a pact of loyalty, an individual covenant between Christ and themselves, reminiscent of the great personalities whom they studied in biblical history: David, Jeremias, Paul, and others. For young people especially, the real meaning of morality is right here, the pact of loyal friendship freely and personally made. They want to give their moral commitment not to a cause or a moral precept, but to a Person.

Priority of Virtue

4. As a consequence of number 3, the response of morality to the call of God, which we spoke about in the first section of this article will seek expression in what we call the virtues, and especially in charity, the soul of all morality. It is essential, therefore, that virtue be understood in its root meaning from Latin, i.e., "manliness," and not as some shallow, merely external piety which repels rather than attracts. This often neglected study of the virtues should take on true-to-life vividness in the biblical personalities encountered in Salvation-History. As examples, they can learn faith from Abraham, hope in Isaiah and the other prophets, charity in Peter, Paul, the other apostles and martyrs. This same methodology would be of advantage in bringing the cardinal virtues to life. How much more effective it is thus to induce the understanding of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance rather than to memorize abstract definitions couched in terms which, even

when understood, empty the virtues of their inspirational value.

Demanding special attention within this context of teaching moral through the virtues is a careful treatment of the cardinal virtue of prudence. In a splendid summary of St. Thomas' classic presentation, Father John Connery, S.J., very neatly calls prudence "the know-how" of all virtue, the intellectual good sense and practical wisdom required to pursue the goal of virtue with balance and integrity. All moral educators should note Father Connery's important point apropos of developing moral judgment in matters of conscience: "The important influence which virtue has on moral judgments of individual acts can hardly be overestimated for moral living; . . . as one grows in virtue, his prudential judgments will penetrate deeper and deeper into the truth." This latter point is significantly pertinent for the next step toward moral formation.

Conscience-Formation

5. In an ideal program, not always of course practicable, it is at this stage that the students should have been sufficiently predisposed for a clear and accurate conscience-formation according to the best moral traditions of high school teaching. Teachers of this casuistic section of morality should, however, ponder seriously Father Connery's wise caution which, though it may be intended more for pastors of souls than classroom teachers of morality, contains a significant message for the latter as well: "False judgments in regard to the morality of individual acts are frequently due not to a defect in the reasoning faculty, but to a lack of virtue. What is needed in such cases is not instruction but inspiration. No amount of instruction will guarantee future correct judgments, since instruction cannot possibly cover all contingencies."

The point is meaningful for religious educators in that it cuts the ground from under any complacency on our part when we have succeeded in giving our students meticulous instruction in straight casuistry. This is not to down-grade casuistry as such; quite the contrary, *mutatis mutandis*, we would agree with what Fathers Kelly and Ford remark concerning seminary moral theology: "Casuistry has a place in moral theology—so much so that there can be no

really practical moral theology without good casuistry." However, it would seem reasonable to add for our school objectives that the minute casuistry of future confessors need not be envisioned for Catholic youth. Rather, at this stage of conscience-formation, when the rights and wrongs, mortal and venial sins are spelled and measured out, it is much more imperative that stronger emphasis fall upon the prior step of the virtues. This is not to say, of course, that one can in the ordinary sense of the word teach students their subjective practice of the virtues. It is a question more of disposing them for God's grace by an attractive objective presentation which is rich in motivating power.

A forceful appeal should be made to the entire personality over and beyond the essential though necessarily incomplete intellectual competence. With too exclusive emphasis upon intelligence alone, the danger is real that the course will achieve at best just that and nothing more, intellectual memorization and, it is hoped, some clarity of understanding. But the difficulty remains that such an approach promises little if any good effect upon his moral life. In point of fact, the controversial issue here runs broader in scope than moral teaching alone. The question pivots on the fundamental objectives envisioned for the entire religious course, a fuller analysis of which has been developed elsewhere.

6. With respect to the problem when to teach what, there are two poles of pertinent interest, the theological and the psychological. As may be pieced together from the antecedent five steps of our development, the ideal theological program would fashion the following into an organic synthesis: Salvation-History, general dogma, liturgy of the Mass and sacraments, with morality and apostolic living as man's response in charity. As shown in the earlier part of this article, the invitation from God is always prior with man's response to follow. "In this is the love, not that we have loved God, but that He has first loved us, and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins."

Turning to the psychological pole of interest, two animadversions seem to be indicated, the first a perhaps unexpected boon, the second a challenge. The boon certainly unexpected by most students, and perhaps by some teachers also, springs from the discovery that theology need not be dull. The

kerygmatic orientation to theology, on the contrary, delivers its own psychological impact. In a word (and to this religion teachers should respond "thanks be to God"), what is theologically sound is psychologically persuasive.

As to the challenge of religious psychology, it springs from the fact of this discipline's relative infancy as a serious study in Catholic circles. There is a pressing need to keep up scientifically with the rapidly evolving character of the American Catholic adolescent. It is a truism to say that we must first understand those with whom we are working before we can hope to reach them in the inner sanctum of their real selves whence alone a bona fide religious commitment can rise. As examples of this need for psychological receptivity, in our present culture it would certainly be wiser to clarify basic sex morality early, while the fuller responsibilities of marriage, social justice, and the like may be left to the later portions of a high school course.

A Final Corollary

A final corollary logically derives from the emphasis given above to the double focal point of kerygmatic theology and psychological receptivity. It is the necessity to parcel out various blocks of the casuistic part of morality over the entire four years instead of the hitherto popular concentration over an entire single year.

In conclusion, it is sincerely hoped that the aims expressed in the opening paragraphs of the first part of this article have been fulfilled. Initially a more theoretic and theological evaluation of the role of morality in the Christian message challenged our reflection, while in this second installment more practical educational orientations have dominated. The third step of active implementation in the form of textbook and classroom pedagogy was perforce outside the limitations of this article. If the ideas assembled here stimulate reflection and discussion among our many talented and resourceful religion teachers, our proximate aim will be happily realized. From the ferment of ideas, whether those presented here or others touching moral education, improved textbooks and classroom procedures will evolve toward the precious goal of a superior moral formation for our youth to the greater glory of God.

Dialogue Between Catholic Clergy and Laity

Joseph Lawrence

"Dialogue" has become one of the most popular words and one of the most popular ideas in our country. People who disagree—husbands and wives, labor and management, Catholics and Protestants—are urged to engage in an "ongoing dialogue." This is merely an erudite way of saying that as long as participants in an argument go on talking to each other they will not come to blows.

Even though such dialogue is particularly important in the controversy among various religious groups in our society, it is also necessary between schools of thought within these groups. No one should think that all Catholics agree or that all Jews agree or that all Protestants agree. Indeed there are many dialogues going on inside the various churches. At present, one can detect the beginnings of a new dialogue within the Catholic Church—one that is of grave importance for the future of the Church in the United States. It would seem that there is a considerable amount of frank discussion going on between certain elements of the clergy and the laity about the difficulties and differences each group finds itself having with the other. At the present stage of the discussion it might be helpful merely to list the points being made by either side without trying to evaluate the position of either or respond to the arguments advanced. It should be clear from the beginning that any dialogue presupposes mutual charity and that disagreement, even violent disagreement, does not imply personal attack.

The laity say the clergy give us no credit for intelligence and no chance to exercise our legitimate freedom within the Church. The real tyrants of the "old school" are perhaps few and far between, but the clergy as a whole have not yet adapted themselves to the fact that the priest is no longer the only educated or the best educated person

in a community. At times there are trap-pings of consultation with the laity, but only rarely do the clergy pay any attention to our suggestions. Granted that the pastor is the head of the parish and must make the final decisions, yet in this age of human relations the clergy should realize that all who are affected by a given decision should be given some kind of voice—at least consultative—in making the decisions. We get the impression that our priests do not really care what we are thinking or what we expect from the Church. They may listen to us but then they go right ahead with their own preconceived—and often ill-advised—plans.

The clergy still live in a ghetto. Not only are they isolated from the non-Catholic world around them, they are also immune to the problems of the temporal world insofar as they affect Catholics. In fact, the clergy don't really value the temporal order. They fail to realize that the God who redeemed is also the God who created, that the laity must sanctify themselves by action in the temporal order, that the secular world is something good and something that, with the rest of creation, is yearning for the saving grace Christ came to bring. But the clergy are so involved in building and administering large physical plants that they have no vision of the temporal world beyond narrowly ecclesiastical confines. Clergymen, with few exceptions, are inclined to ignore political, economic, labor, and racial problems unless such problems have an immediate and obvious effect on their parishes. Their argument that these things are really unimportant if men and women save their souls is contrary to all the teachings of the recent popes that it is

Courtesy of *The Catholic World*, 401 West 59th St., New York 19. From the December 1959 issue entitled "What's Wrong With the Laity?"

precisely in this world of temporal problems that people do save their souls.

The clergy have no appreciation for the value of true intellectual effort. They feel that Catholic dogma gives them the answer to all major problems that mankind faces and that they need merely to look in their textbooks for the answers to any questions that the laity bring to them. Theology is the queen of the sciences but they make it practically the only science. Sociology, chemistry, biology, anthropology—all these are to be approached with distrust since they bring up objections to the certain truth of theology. The average cleric feels on the defensive when faced with temporal knowledge, if indeed he does not completely reject its value.

Priests and Scholarship

He is not aware that the vast majority of objective social and physical scientists feel no obligation to launch attacks on organized religion and that indeed many of them are devout believers. Hence the clergy tend to advise lay people to flee from the difficulties that temporal learning may offer to the religious person instead of facing these difficulties in the tradition of Augustine and Aquinas. Many of them have an attitude only less obscurantist than that of the priest who said, "The Blessed Mother never went to college, much less a non-Catholic college," as an argument against higher education for girls. The clergy, by and large, have no grasp of the tensions Catholics feel at secular universities and are, in fact, suspicious of any Catholic who is engaged in serious intellectual effort.

The clergy have little understanding of the problems which a layman must face in his life. It's all well and good for priests to praise large families, but they never had to support such a family. Despite all their pontifical pronouncements on every subject from labor relations to child care, the clergy have had little practical experience in any of the subjects about which they are so generous with their advice. They never really have had to earn a living or meet a payroll or sell a client or argue a case or take care of sick children. They don't know what lay people go through and don't have any real sympathy for their difficulties. Nor are they able to give the spiritual guidance

which so many lay people now are seeking. A layman groping for spiritual help gets neat little homilies but nothing that has any meaning for his life; and Sunday sermons are usually a waste of time. Furthermore, for all the talk about the liturgy and Catholic Action, very few clergymen really seem interested in these subjects. Liturgy means first communicants in a forty hours procession and Catholic Action means contributing to fund drives. Some of the laity are actually scandalized by the way papal and episcopal directives are ignored by their parish priests.

Even in their own areas many of the clergy are incompetent. The schools they build are too small or not built soon enough. The roofs of their churches leak. They are not good confessors, they don't preach well, they don't get gymnasiums up quick enough, they don't run efficient youth programs, they are not interested in scouting or athletics for the younger children, they don't hire good lay teachers, they don't know how to raise funds. They have a position with built in status and security without any necessary competence. We have to struggle and work for every bit of prestige and security we have and it does not seem fair that their lot should be any different.

The Other Side

These arguments, some of them calm and rational, others unfair and querulous are heard often. However, there is another side of the picture. Not a few priests feel that they have their own share of legitimate complaints against the laity and that it is high time for someone to listen to these complaints.

They say that the laity do not really understand what a parish is for. Priests were not trained and ordained to be baby sitters or recreational directors. The main purposes of the parish are to worship God, to administer the sacraments, and to preach the Word of God. Parish organizations are good insofar as they contribute to these functions and bad insofar as they consume priestly time which could be used more efficiently for the essential goals of the parish. The Protestant churches with very little dogma or liturgy have to rely on social service activities to maintain their congregations. The Catholic Church does not and should not. Parish organizations, parish ac-

tivities are good in their place, but many lay people are unaware of what that place is.

The laity are not ready to concede to the clergy the spiritual leadership which the latter have by ordination. Even if we admit that there is room for a lot more consultation than already exists, still many laymen would not be satisfied unless they were actually running everything in the parish. Their criticisms are perhaps often valid, but often too they are based on snap judgments and a complete disregard for the fact that a pastor may know more about a given situation than some of his parishioners. A man may be an expert in law or medicine or business, but this does not mean that he knows anything about running a parish and his complaints are often based on nothing more than his own personal emotional insecurity and his need to find a scapegoat for that insecurity. He is not compelled to have any of the reverence for his clergy that he must have for his business and professional associates. Furthermore, the laity seem to demand an almost impossible amount of competence from its clergy. The priest must be a jack-of-all-trades and it is impossible for him to be as good at all his functions as a layman might be at his own particular specialty. The surgeon who talks as though preaching is the sole standard of clerical competence does not have the faintest idea of what parish life involves. Nor does he really care to find out.

Primacy of Charity

Those Catholics who claim to be intellectuals forget that charity is the most important of virtues. Certainly many priests have been less than sympathetic with Catholic intellectuals in recent years. But it is almost a required fashion that the Catholic intellectual in good standing should have a kind of despair about anything good coming from the main body of organized Catholicism. They are interested in telling their pastors about what is being done in France, but care precious little about doing anything themselves in this country. They use their past experiences with clergymen to justify almost complete inaction with regard to organized Catholicism. In fact, one begins to suspect that any Catholic intellectual daring to suggest that some good might

come out of a parish would have his union card revoked.

The laity are, by and large, too interested in making money and having a good time to be really serious about apostolic activity of any sort. Many stories are spread about the layman whose help is rejected by the old-fashioned pastor, but there are quite a few stories which are not being circulated about the modern pastor who is unable to get any lay co-operation when he honestly seeks it. Even in those situations where the laity are given all the opportunity they could possibly want, no one is breaking the rectory door down looking for things to do. They're too busy right now. They can't be in the Catholic Family Movement this year because it interferes with their bridge night. They'll be glad to help but they don't want to assume responsibility. They've done enough now, it's someone else's turn.

Apathy: A Problem

They don't think their teen-agers are old enough for social service work. They don't want the clergy passing off all their work. The excuses go on and on, but often they simply mean that people are lazy. The picture of millions of dedicated laymen being kept at bay by unsympathetic clergy is largely mythical. Few lay people are really willing and eager to assume apostolic responsibility. Indeed many a businessman is apt to look on his parish as being something really rather unimportant other than as an educational center for his children. He looks on his clergy as inhabitants of a relatively insignificant world of women and children whereas he is engaged in the really important activities of business and profession.

Finally, the laity are really far more conservative than many of the clergy. Even though some priests are less enthusiastic about active participation at Mass, the average layman's reaction to a program of dialogue or sung Mass in his parish is adamant opposition. He doesn't like changes in the familiar patterns of what he takes to be Catholicism. He resents the change in the laws of Eucharistic fasting; he demands to know why they can't make up their minds about fast and abstinence and vigils and the proper Masses in the missal. And why can't there be just one translation of the Bible so the Gospel the priest reads on

Sunday will be the same as the one he is reading in his missal? The very thought of having parts of the Mass in the vernacular is enough to send him into a tailspin. And he also wishes that Rome would do something about the Eastern rites priests with their wives and families; they are a source of embarrassment. In short, a good number of laymen don't know the difference between the accidental and the essential in the Church and hence are anything but liberal when it comes to a change in the accidentals.

So the arguments go; and many more like them could be listed. It might be maintained that it is a shame that people are saying such things to and about each other. However, the exact opposite might be nearer to the truth. Perhaps it is a sign of the health and vitality of the American Church that such a dialogue has begun. In such a dynamic society as ours there are bound to be all kinds of frictions as changes follow each other in dizzying succession. A real danger would be that the people affected by the changes would keep their feelings to themselves and build up abiding resentment or, on the contrary, that they might just stop caring.

The existence of the lay-clerical dialogue might well be proof that American Catholics do very much care about what happens to their Church and are willing to devote considerable time and effort to intelligent thought and discussion about the problems it faces. Although the dialogue may occasionally become a little ill-tempered, this is inevitable when people discuss something about which they are deeply concerned. American Catholics are not going to become anticlericals in the European sense. They are not going to throw stones at their priests because that would prove most embarrassing the next time they had the priest over for dinner. Nor are they going to burn down rectories because they know that the following Sunday they would have to make initial contributions to a new building fund. Neither are the clergy likely to retreat into the rectory and refuse to speak to any of their parishioners on the grounds that this would involve a loss of dignity.

The differences between clergy and laity in America may be serious, but they are not such as to portend doom. In fact, the free and charitable discussion of these differences may be an omen of great growth.

UNDERSTANDING SYMBOLS

So it is when he talks to the Samaritan woman: "If thou knowest what it is God gives, and who it is that is saying to thee, Give me drink, it would have been for thee to ask him instead, and he would have given thee living water." By "living water" he does not mean fresh water or running water, as the woman supposes. He means that all the water you can find in this world of sense, the purest, the freshest to be had anywhere, is only dead water; the real water, the real living water, is something which does not belong to the world of sense at all. We shall never know what water really means until we have the direct experience of that reality of grace which water is only a pale image. So with the vine; the vines you may see growing on some hillside in France are not real vines, he tells us, thy are only a sort of imitation.

RONALD KNOX.

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The Paulist Institute has prepared a kit to assist priests in their parish convert work. This kit is arranged according to the following progression: (1) The creation of good-will through the works of Christian charity; (2) specific means of winning a hearing, with extensive material on the method of the Open House or Friendship Sunday; (3) ideas on instruction from registration to visual aids; (4) ideas on the reception of converts and their after-care.

We think that priests who are interested in convert work will be pleased with this material. Those who have already received it have been, and some of them have promptly ordered additional kits for their friends.

The cost per kit is \$1.00.



BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

The Third National Conference on Convert Work was held at Dunwoodie last year. The Book of Proceedings for this Conference is now available in limited quantity. We have 500 volumes selling at a price of \$2.00 which is approximately cost. The book is filled with practical suggestions for a parish program in convert work.



For Kit or Book of Proceedings write to:

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CATECHETICAL MATERIALS

Probably every instructor of inquiry classes looks at some time or other for some kind of change of pace in the presentation of the study material. A good audio-visual aid is the answer. We suggest *The Good News of Christ*, distributed by Roa's Films. This is a film strip series emphasizing the Kerygma, the glad tidings of God's love for us in Christ. Its unique attraction is that it re-creates in live photography the environment, the events, the times and places of Jesus.

We believe this series to be a particularly effective method of catechizing in that it presents Sacred Scripture as the orientation to foster a commitment to Jesus Christ. With the modern revival of Catholic Biblical study, *The Good News of Christ* can be a most valuable ally in re-enacting (in the context of authentic scenery and cultural background) the words and deeds of the Son of God as they are told in Sacred Scripture. The value of live photography was clearly stressed by Pope Pius XII in his address: *The Movies and the Nature of Man*: "The viewer is captured by the world before his eyes . . . he lives in the place of the leading figure; he feels with him." This is precisely the possibility in this filmstrip series. The whole lineup is most artistically done, but what is more important, it allows the instructee the optimum of personal identification with the Biblical situation which is recorded in both sound and color.

One of the problems we face in inquiry classes is to find some clear and concrete basis for the formation of distinct ideas. This type of photography supplies the power. As a medium of arousing interest and retaining attention, the *Good News* series ranks with the best in our experience with inquirers on all levels. It has almost assured permanent learning by the vivid-

ness of the scenes—impressions imparted through eye and ear.

Two further impressions of its value: first, our students in inquiry classes have been given some vicarious experience of Biblical lands and customs; second, they have become involved in the dramatic situation portrayed.

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The series is expensive—\$65 each part—\$240 for the entire series, but well worth it.

While our thinking centers around the "convert instruction potential" of this series, it might also be used for regular religious classes in parochial schools, C.C.D. Vacation Bible Schools, and for Adult Bible Studies. It may be obtained (even on a ten-day free trial) from the Paulist Institute, 411 West 59th Street, New York 19, N. Y. We are sure you'll like it.

JAMES B. LLOYD, C.S.P.

READING I'VE LIKED

The express purpose of the new Catholic periodical *The Bible Today* is to supply the urgent need for "a publication that will provide a gradual and continuing education in the Bible for those who have not the time nor the background necessary to correlate all the published material." The first issue appeared in October and it measures up magnificently to the high purposes of its founders. If you preach or teach religion, I don't see how you can afford to miss the good things it provides. Six issues annually. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. Twelve issues, \$5.00. Ten or more copies to one address 25¢ a copy.

A significant contribution to the cause of ecumenism is the new bi-monthly publication called *The Ecumenist*. It is edited by Father Gregory Baum, O.S.A., noted authority on the subject and has an editorial staff that includes Paulists, Basilians, Jesuits, Atonements and other priests associated with "re-union work." Priests long devoted to the work of conversions are increasingly aware of the adjustments in their thinking made necessary by this God-inspired movement. You may obtain this publication free of charge by writing to its sponsors and publishers, The Ecumenist, % The Paulist Press, 180 Varick Street, New York 14, N. Y.

Catechists, preachers and parents will welcome a new series of pamphlets on the liturgical year written by Mary Perkins Ryan. Six booklets under the general title "Redeeming the Time" cover the subject from the pre-Advent season to the Sundays after Pentecost. The author who has done so much to popularize the liturgy and the traditional way of leading the Christian life, is at her level best. 15¢ a piece. The Paulist Press, 180 Varick St., New York 14, N. Y.

Something different in the way of a Missal to recommend to your converts is *The Layman's Missal: Prayerbook and Ritual*, from the Helicon Press, Baltimore. It is an English version of a French work which provides a full Sunday missal with many other feasts, including the daily Masses of Lent and texts of the services of Holy Week. One of the greatest needs of the convert is to acquire facility in the fundamental devotional practices of Catholics. And he looks for aid in a prayerbook and missal that is free from some of the "archaism, artificiality and avoidable obscurity"

of some books of devotion. The book is beautifully printed, with excellent illustrations. The translations are superb. And the extensive explanation of the Mass, the liturgical year, the sacraments are all we might expect from a group of English scholars who have prepared this volume. Donald Attwater is general editor, assisted by Fathers J. D. Chrichton, Sebastian Bullogh, Clifford Howell and Harold Winstone.

Some thoughtful inquirers have difficulty accepting the existence of God. They may be greatly assisted by *Ways of Thinking About God*, by Edward Sillem (Sheed & Ward, \$3.75). Their problems are sympathetically recognized in the author's unique approach. He stages an imaginary discussion between St. Thomas Aquinas and a group of modern philosophers to illustrate how Aquinas might have adapted his reasoning to the perplexities of modern man.

GUIDE

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GUIDE

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Guide Lights

COMMENTS ON THE COUNCIL . . .

Fast moving world events have tended to crowd the Vatican Council out of the news to some extent. This tendency has not been impeded by the paucity of information creeping out of the Council itself. Despite these obstacles, however, the coverage has been encouraging. The battery of reporters assigned to this task have done a generally good job even when they have had to make something out of nothing.

The difficulties they face in view of the secrecy of the sessions have been somewhat alleviated for the American reporters by the establishment of a subsidiary press office set up through the Rome office of the National Catholic Welfare Council. A committee of bishops and a panel of experts are taking care of this program.

The Council Fathers deliberated at length on the first item of the agenda, the very important one of the liturgy. Summary accounts have been issued, but final decisions still have to be reached. For this reason it would seem premature to dwell on certain possibilities that seem to be developing. It would be even more premature to peer into items not yet under discussion. Consequently, we shall content ourselves with relating various comments gleaned from Catholic and non-Catholic sources.

- All of the American cardinals have been approached by the press and all of them have responded. Francis Cardinal Spellman noted that the world has gone through many changes since the last Vatican Council, social, political, economic, cultural, and scientific changes. And he said: "The Church, taking into consideration the moral and spiritual implications of these changes, must seek answers to the problems they create." He continued: "Through all these revolutionary advances the Church's mission remains the same for all time. It is to save men's souls. But to fulfill this mission she has always to explore new ways of applying eternal principles and of interpreting changeless truths. And she needs to renew her own spiritual vitality, to be able to awaken the Christian spirit in the hearts of her people. This spiritual awakening, this Christian rebirth is a principal goal of the council."

- Father Vandenbusche, S.J., writes from Brussels: "The Catholics of Belgium generally do not expect the general council to solve all the many needs of the Church today. But they do hope the bishops of the world will create a favorable climate for a gradual and a prudent solution. Belgian Catholics are among the best informed in the world. They have had available countless books and articles about the council. They have a balanced sense about what the council can achieve and have no wild hopes."

- Participants from Africa predict that one of the achievements of the council will be "religious decolonization." They say it will do away with all remaining elements in ecclesiastical organization and practice that cause non-whites to identify Christianity with domination by the white man. The creation of a Secretariat of the Pan-African Episcopacy showed the determination of the hierarchy in Africa to stress the interests and problems shared by Catholics throughout the continent. These number some 24,000,000, about 10% of the population.

- Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan of Atlanta was questioned on whether the vernacular would replace Latin. He said it was still an open question. And he added that he had been amused to hear some of the Fathers of the council defend the use of the vernacular in "exquisite Latin." Other experts expect a compromise in this area.

- Returning to this country, Methodist Bishop Fred Pierce Corson made a number of interesting remarks. Bishop Corson is an official observer at the council and head of the World Methodist Council. In his latter capacity he had a private audience with Pope John. He said of the council that differences among the Fathers have been greatly exaggerated. "Differences exist," he said, "but they do not represent either a revolt or a split—they rather reflect the desire of the Pope for free discussion on all issues before a decision." He said also: "The Roman Catholic assembly is doing Protestantism a great service insofar as it focuses attention on the need for purification, reformation and renewal in all churches if Christianity is to become the way of life for this age." Referring to

his audience with the Pope, Bishop Corson said that the Holy Father asked him to outline his responsibilities as head of a diocese (Methodist area) and also of a World Church body. When he had finished, the Pope smiled and said: "Then your job is like mine."

Another Protestant at the council is Dr. Joseph H. Jackson of Chicago. He is the president of the National Baptist Convention, the largest American Negro church group. He is not a delegate-observer, but is attending as the guest of the Vatican Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity. He described the council as "a great force for good." "What I hope for out of this conference is good will," he said. "Beyond that we can look for little regarding unity. I expect the practical measures that come forth to be all in the field of good will."

BEA ON BAPTISM . . .

"The Catholic Church lays down definitely the general doctrine of the New Testament that by valid baptism, even conferred outside the Roman Catholic Church, the baptized is organically united to Christ and to His Mystical Body, becomes through grace an adopted son of God and hence all the validly baptized are brothers. Now just as the Catholic Church teaches that she is the true Church of Christ, she considers [that] the baptized who live apart from her belong essentially to her in some way as 'sons' of the Church and our 'brethren.' This is in keeping with the expressions which we hear so often from the lips of the Holy Father when he calls these 'separated brethren' and also his 'sons.' He does not say and would never say this of the non-baptized, of the non-Christians. It is true, on the other hand, that these separated brethren do not recognize and do not consider the Catholic Church as the true Church of Christ. Consequently they are in some way separated from her and so are not her children and members *in the full sense*. They are separated from Catholics by differences in belief, by differences in the use of the means of the life of grace, the sacraments, and also by the fact that they do not acknowledge the authority of the Church and the Roman Pontiff. Now these differences are certainly very grave but nevertheless they do not destroy nor do they remove that certain basic belonging to Christ and His Mystical Body and to the Church which we have affirmed above. From what has been said, it is clear in what position our separated brethren stand in respect to *the salvation of their souls*. Those being baptized, insofar as they sin-

cerely accept and live in the faith in which they have been born and educated, these brethren in virtue of their belonging to Christ, receive the aids necessary for a true religious life, for the observance of the law of God and therefore also, for their salvation. They are then on the way of salvation and this by virtue of that fundamental belonging to Christ and to the Church of which we have already spoken."

VISIBLE UNITY . . .

Father Louis Bouyer, speaking of the ecumenical movement in Protestantism, sees four distinct trends and three temptations.

The first trend: Local efforts to fuse church organizations that do not reflect conflicting views. (2) World-wide attempts to unite local bodies holding the same views. (3) Local federations or unions of different churches, either by compromise or genuine synthesis between formerly conflicting views. (4) Protestant research regarding the positive elements in the divergent notions of what really constitutes the Church. This distinguished student of Protestantism, a priest of the Paris Oratory, finds ample evidences of all these trends.

He discerns three temptations in Protestant ecumenism: (1) Sometimes active but not to be over-emphasized, the temptation to reduce ecumenism to a mere federation of Protestant organizations against a common foe, sometimes against the Catholic Church—a very minor factor; (2) To reduce ecumenism to a positive cooperation between churches, but without even seriously posing the question of unity of the Church; (3) To achieve ecumenism only on a basis of practical compromise. Opposed to these three temptations lies the hope only in a rediscovery, through returning to the sources of Revelation, of what is not only the Christian ideal but the reality of the Church as willed and created by God's Word in Christ, and therefore, how it reconciles in itself all that there may be of positive value in the partial and conflicting idea the Protestants have had hitherto of the Church.

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS . . .

In 1960, 16 archdioceses and 54 dioceses had declines in convert figures. There were 10 archdioceses and 53 dioceses which gained. New York led the archdioceses with a gain of 306. Boston suffered the greatest drop going from 6,045 in 1959 to 2,112 in 1960. Lafayette led the dioceses with a gain of 380, while San Diego dropped from 5,926 to 4,179. At the same time San Diego still leads all dioceses in total number of converts.

JOHN J. KEATING, C.S.P.

PAULIST



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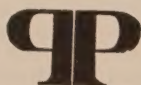
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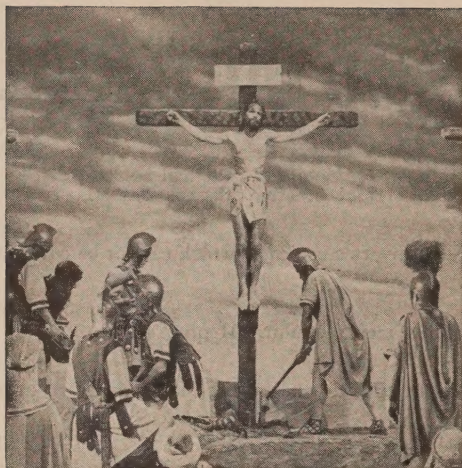
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